

BARGAINING AGENDA OF THE EMPLOYER

THE CROWN IN RIGHT OF ONTARIO

The Ontario Public Service exists for one overarching purpose: to make available to the people of Ontario excellent sustainable public services that their tax dollars pay for. The Employer is committed to ensuring that this objective is achieved.

The Ontario Public Service is fortunate to have a first-class workforce that is in place to achieve this overarching purpose. The Employer is committed to ensuring that a first-class workforce continues to be in place.

That portion of the OPS that is represented by OPSEU is by far the largest part of this workforce. The Employer is committed to collective bargaining with OPSEU, as the freely-chosen representative of the employees, to provide for fair and responsible terms and conditions of employment.

Successful collective bargaining cannot be achieved unless the parties understand each other's interests. The Employer is committed to open, rational, respectful and candid discussion at the bargaining table, in order to ensure that the parties' respective interests are fully understood. From this platform, issues, even difficult ones, can be rationally dealt with and accommodated, creative and innovative solutions can be explored, and agreement can be reached.

There are a number of issues that the Employer wishes to address in collective bargaining with OPSEU. Through dialogue, the Employer's perspective may change. After dialogue, more specific proposals may emerge. After further discussion and consideration, proposals may be amended. Ultimately, agreement will result.

Term

The last three agreements have had terms of three (3) years each. The Employer proposes, this time, an agreement of at least three (3) years, but suggests that consideration be given to a four (4) year term.

Modern Recruitment Methods

The Employer wishes to explore the increased use of contemporary hiring methods, including pool and/or pipeline hiring, backfilling, secondments, competency-based recruitment, developmental assignments, cross-appointments, and web-based recruitment strategies.

Non-Bargaining Unit Personnel

The parties are engaged in extensive, and expensive, litigation over the use of non-bargaining unit personnel. The Employer would prefer to resolve these issues at the bargaining table, if possible, and wishes to discuss the appropriate use of non-bargaining unit personnel. As part of this analysis, the Employer wishes to ensure that the provisions of the collective agreement are responsive and appropriate and particularly, recognize that sometimes non-OPS personnel will work in OPS workplaces, and sometimes OPS personnel will work in non-OPS workplaces. This cannot only allow the employer flexibility but provides employees with the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge.

In-Placement/Workforce Adjustment Measures

Most collective agreements provide for mechanisms that allow for changes (including but not limited to reduction) in the workforce. This collective agreement is no exception. While these mechanisms have been amended somewhat over the years, they were, for the most part, put in place at a time when there were not as many rapid changes in work methods and workplaces of all kinds. Furthermore, they are perhaps not adequately responsive to the needs of both the employer and employees relating to employment security, rather than to job security. The current provisions tend to be expensive and inflexible, and may be insufficiently targeted at retaining skilled employees.

The Employer believes that it is necessary to re-examine the current provisions, and assess whether amendments may now be necessary, or whether some different approaches may be better, both for the employer and employees.

Areas which might be examined include redeployment, exit payments, displacement, and re-training, and the inter-relationships among them, as well as the basic principles and rules that govern them, and their efficiency.

Vacation Credits

The Employer proposes that, in some circumstances, newly-hired employees be offered higher levels of vacation than are currently set out in the collective agreement. This is to assist in attracting highly-qualified candidates, with considerable work experience, to the public service.

It is not intended that this be open-ended. It would be targeted to certain categories of jobs where it is difficult to attract highly-qualified people. The Employer would be willing to discuss reasonable parameters and guidelines.

Ontario Internship Program

The Ontario Internship Program is an example of a successful initiative that enhances the revitalization of the workforce, to the benefit of all. The Employer proposes renewing the Program, with an increased number of interns, and wishes to consider whether it can be made more flexible in some respects.

Sustainable Public Services

The OPS is facing an increasingly competitive labour market, and it is necessary to attract candidates of the highest calibre. Within the workforce, some staffing provisions in the collective agreement make it ever more difficult to ensure that the right people are in place and that there is the flexibility to address the business requirements of the future. The Employer proposes that consideration be given to strategies that respect the principle of providing opportunities to existing employees, while enhancing flexibility, efficiency, improving developmental opportunities, and taking advantage of the expanded use of technology.

Enhanced Severance

The Employer wishes to re-examine the circumstances under which enhanced severance is paid in surplus situations, and whether some of the resources expended in this way may be better utilized in other ways, such as retraining or other redeployment initiatives.

Termination Pay

The collective agreement currently provides a generous termination payment on cessation of employment. The Employer wishes to explore whether such a payment continues to be appropriate in the case of purely voluntary terminations, and retirements.

Articling Students

The Employer wishes to discuss whether articling students have a greater community of interest with lawyers with whom they regularly work, and whether they should therefore be covered by the OCAA/ALOC Framework Agreement.

Summer Students

Appropriate rates for summer students require revision.

Project Work

The Employer wishes to ensure that the provisions of the collective agreement are responsive to its needs to fill positions on projects quickly, and to complete projects without undue disruption.

Accommodation

Employment accommodation and health reassignments can sometimes create challenges, particularly in smaller centres, and the Employer wishes to explore potential solutions.

VDT Issues

It is a legitimate question as to how frequently and under what criteria a routine eye examination and other related considerations are required for computer operators.